



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, February 6 - 19, 2010

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found on the FWP website.

NOTE: FWP has recently redesigned and reorganized its Website. We appreciate your patience as we work out a few more bugs. The Wolf Program Home Page can be found at <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. If you get an error page, go to the FWP Home page and look for Montana Wolves under Fish & Wildlife

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Work continues on the annual report.

On 2/9, Bradley followed up on reports of 3 wolves sighted on Mt Jumbo in Missoula. Snow tracking conditions were good and she was able to determine the animals seen were coyotes.

Hunters, other recreationists, and landowners can help FWP monitor the population by reporting wolf observations, tracks, or sign through the FWP online reporting button. You can also report wolves or wolf sign by contacting the closest wolf specialist or FWP office, or mailing a wolf observation card.

Flights: Asher flew in the Paradise Valley and the Boulder (south of Big Timber) on 2/16.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 2/8, WS confirmed that a calf was injured by Fishtrap pack wolves on 2/3 after entering a pasture enclosed with turbo Fladry on private land. This is the third event of wolves from the pack killing, injuring, and harassing cattle since early January. A decrease in the local white-tailed deer population, and an internal change in the pack dynamics (replacement of the breeding pair) may be factors influencing the recent changed behavior of the pack. FWP authorized removal of up to 4 wolves (about half the pack).

On 2/11, CSKT confirmed that the Dry Forks pack killed a llama that had been illegally grazing on Tribal land adjacent to a Large Animal Sanctuary where previous depredations have occurred. No control action will be initiated.

On 2/15, WS confirmed that a calf was killed by wolves in the Big Hole on private land. Tracks of at least four animals were documented during the investigation. WS has been authorized to lethally remove the Miner Lakes pack. The last confirmed depredation occurred on 12/21/09 and FWP had authorized pack removal at that time, but the work had not been fully completed yet as only two wolves were killed on 1/8. The 12/21 incident occurred on the same ranch.

On 2/15, FWP Warden Johnson received a report of a dog possibly attacked by wolves up the Burnt Fork in the Bitterroot the night before. The dog, a miniature daschound, was bitten several times but survived and is recovering well. The owner saw 2 wolves on the hill above his house after the incident and so thought the wolves had attacked his dog but also thought it seemed unlikely that the dog would have survived. After looking at photos of tracks FWP and the dog owner agreed that a mountain lion had probably attacked the dog.

On 2/17, MT WS and CSKT collared and released a gray male and removed a gray male from the Camas Prairie pack. Efforts to remove one more wolf are ongoing.

Outreach and Education

On 2/8, WS Steuber, Foster, Noftsker, Maetzold attended the Garfield County Commissioners meeting.

On 2/10, WS Foster and Rost attended the Sweetwater Wool Pool meeting.

On 2/12, Sime gave a guest lecture “remotely” for a graduate class at Oregon State University. About 20 people participated.

On 2/17, Sime / Lance, FWP area biologist Fager, and other FWP staff attended a meeting in Polaris (Grasshopper Valley) as a follow up to the meeting in Wisdom for those who did attend that meeting. WS also attended. FWP provided updates and answered questions about local wolf packs, wolf management, litigation, funding, the influence on the ID wolf population along the MT/ID border, and the hunting season. It was a very good discussion. The meeting was held at the High Country Lodge and we appreciate the Kipp’s hosting this meeting. About 30 people attended.

On 2/18, Lance attended a screening of a film Lords of Nature in Great Falls and participated in a panel discussion after the film. About 25 people attended.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 2/9, FWP retrieved the carcass of a pup that was hit by a vehicle on Hwy 287 near Reynolds Pass. FWP thanks MT DOT in Ennis for the help.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court

Montana's interests in support of delisting have been represented and brought forward through efforts by FWP in consultation with the Montana Attorney General's Office. FWP filed its last written brief on 1/28.

FWP argued that: 1. for a variety of reasons, it is lawful for USFWS to establish different levels of protection for a species, subspecies or Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act; 2. the facts show that Montana's existing regulatory mechanisms will keep wolf populations well above the federal recovery criteria and encourage connectivity; 3. sufficient genetic exchange has taken place and will continue; and 4. Montana's hunting season is not a basis for relisting the gray wolf.

At this time, a hearing for oral arguments has not been scheduled but could be at any time.

Background:

On 6/2, a coalition of 13 groups challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). On 8/20, a preliminary injunction request was filed, requesting that wolves be placed back on the Endangered Species list while the court decides the main case within the next year – thus preventing a fall hunting season in Montana and Idaho. On 9/8, the injunction request was denied, leaving a delisted, state-based legal framework in place in Montana while the main lawsuit moves forward.

During the course of the litigation, Montana state laws, administrative rules, and the federally-approved management plan remain in effect. Wolves are classified and protected under Montana law as a species in need of management. The FWP Commission has the authority to issue rules and regulations regarding the protection and periodic taking of the animal (as through hunting seasons for example). FWP is the lead agency for wolves, assisted by USDA Wildlife Services if wolves are confirmed to have injured or killed livestock.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The Board met on October 23. The agenda and minutes from previous meetings are available at [Montana Department of Livestock](http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp). The next full Board meeting will be April 9 in the Montana Capitol and Internet streaming is expected. The full agenda will be publicized as the meeting date approaches, but is expected to include funding and rulemaking. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP online. Use the following shortcut link and be sure to update your bookmarks: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock death loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.